



STATE OF MAINE

WIOA Annual Performance Report

Program Year 2019

December 1, 2020

Contents

Introduction	3
Maine’s Workforce Development System	3
State Workforce Board	3
Local Workforce Areas	4
Progress on State Vision and Goals	5
Workforce System Goals:	5
State Level:	5
Local Level:	6
Promising Practices for Achieving State Vision and Goals	7
Early Deployment of Technology	7
Virtual Work Readiness Youth	7
Addressing a “Silver Tsunami” in Rural Maine	8
Bridge to Healthcare Careers	8
Lewiston CareerCenter Community Partnership	9
Whole Family Approach to Service Delivery	9
Saddleback Virtual and Drive-Through Job Fair	9
Construction Sector Partnership	9
Braiding Services to Assist Transitioning Veteran and Spouse	10
Weekly Jobseeker Newsletter	10
Workforce and Recovery	10
Connecting New Mainers to the Financial Services Sector	11
Life Navigator Role in Serving Individuals with Barriers to Employment	11
Employer-Driven Approach for Youth	11
PY19 Challenges	12
National Dislocated Worker Grants	13
Opioid Disaster DWG	13
COVID Disaster DWG	14
In-School and Out-of-School Youth	15
Performance and Accountability	15
PY19 Negotiated and Actual Outcomes	15
Reportable Individuals	16
Calculating Performance	16
Unadjusted Negotiated Performance Levels for PY2018 and PY2019 by Local Area	17
Effectiveness Serving Employers (ESE)	18
Data Validation	18
Customer Satisfaction	19
Sector and Business Engagement and Strategies	21
The Statewide Workforce Assistance Team (SWAT)	21
Maine Apprenticeship Program	21
Waivers & Program Evaluation	22
Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion	23
Set-Aside Funds	25
Wagner-Peyser 7(b) Funds	25

Introduction

Between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020, approximately 181,336 job seekers accessed workforce services through Maine's JobLink system. This number represents an increase of 139,336 job seekers over the previous year. Of those, 3,756 participated in staff-assisted career services provided by the Bureau of Employment Services and 1,174 individuals were provided career and training services through the adult (560), dislocated worker (214) and youth (400) formula-funded programs.

The program year began with an unprecedentedly low unemployment rate of 2.8 percent. It spiked to a high of 10.4 percent by April 2020 due to the COVID pandemic but has steadily decreased since, settling at 5.4 percent in November 2020. Although a vast number of workers transitioned smoothly to remote work through virtual technology, pandemic-related factors such as school and daycare closures, social distancing requirements and a resurgence of contractions of the COVID virus, continue to impact the ability of many workers to return to work. With over 35,000 unemployment claimants expected to exhaust benefits over the next few months, Maine joins other States in another wave of uncertainty.

In addition to formula funded programs, Maine workforce partners began the work of two disaster relief grants. Referred to as "Connecting to Opportunities", the first grant focuses on Maine's opioid crisis. Grant resources will be used to hire disaster relief workers who will connect individuals who have been affected by the opioid crisis to career services and will connect other dislocated workers to training for careers that address substance use disorder.

The second disaster relief grant focuses on serving target populations who have been dislocated from work due to COVID-19 and who have significant barriers to accessing humanitarian services and employment. More detail on these efforts is provided later in this report.

Maine's Workforce Development System

State Workforce Board

Governor Janet Mills appointed several new members to the State Workforce Board in early 2019. In addition to required members, the Governor appointed a member from the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development and established an advisory group to the State board made up of leads from the Maine Community College System, University of Maine System, Maine Department of Corrections, Maine Department of Transportation, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. For a current list of board members visit:

<https://www.maine.gov/swb/board/index.shtml>.

With input from workforce partners and stakeholders, the State board developed and submitted the Unified Plan approved by USDOL to guide Maine's workforce system from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2023.




Local Workforce Areas:

Maine consists of three Local Workforce Areas and services are provided through designated service delivery sites ("one stops"), as described below. The necessary shift to provision of virtual services in FY19, initiated as a result of the COVID pandemic, additionally permits customers to access the full range of career and training services from each region's workforce areas, from their homes.

The **Northeastern** area serves five of Maine's most vast and rural counties Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Washington, and covers over half of the State's geography. Bangor is the local area's urban hub and the State's third largest city with a population of 32,167. This city houses the Bangor CareerCenter, the local area's comprehensive one-stop. There are nine additional affiliate sites across the five counties. The provider of Title IB services in this region's largest county is the Aroostook County Action Program, the remaining four counties are served by Eastern Maine Development Corporation.

The **Central Western** area serves Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford and Somerset Counties. The urban hub for this area consists of two sister cities, Lewiston-Auburn with Lewiston being the second largest city in the state with a population of 35,868. The Lewiston CareerCenter is the comprehensive one-stop and five additional affiliate sites are located throughout the five counties. The Central Western Maine Workforce Board conducted a competitive procurement during the program year resulting in a new service provider, Eastern Maine Development Corp. (EMDC) that will act as the one-stop operator and provider of adult, dislocated worker and youth services, replacing Western Maine Community Action as the title 1B service provider for the local area.

The **Coastal Counties** area makes up the remainder of the state and includes Cumberland, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo and York Counties. The comprehensive one-stop is in the downtown area of Portland, Maine's largest city with a population of 66,067. Five affiliate sites are also located in this local area. The title IB service provider for the region is Workforce Solutions, a subsidiary of Goodwill Industries of Northern New England. Although the smallest region geographically, the six counties house the greatest number of Maine residents and businesses. Best practices from each of Maine's local workforce areas are discussed later in this report, for additional information please visit local board websites at:

-  Northeastern Workforce Development Board <http://www.northeasternwddb.org>
-  Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board <http://www.cwmwdb.org>
-  Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc. <http://www.coastalcounties.org>

Progress on State Vision and Goals

Maine envisions its residents and businesses will have economic opportunity and contribute to the growth of Maine through a responsive, networked, and coordinated workforce development system across public and private sectors. All components of the workforce development system will be provided seamlessly, resulting in increased education and employment attainment for residents with a focus on careers, not just jobs, and support Maine's business sectors with skilled and qualified workers.

Workforce System Goals:

- Maine's untapped labor pool will enter employment and advance in high-demand occupations of their choice through private and public investment in training, education, and supports.
- Current and future workers will be equipped to meet industry talent needs, with a goal of 60 percent of Maine's workforce attaining a credential of value by 2025.
- Creation of a networked, aligned and demand-driven workforce system across public and private partners that fosters growth of Maine's economy while supporting equitable, safe, and productive employment opportunities.

State Level:

The State Workforce Board (SWB) has been working with partners at the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and the Governor's Economic Recovery Committee in the development of a recovery plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In August, the SWB initiated a partnership with DECD, the University of Maine System, the Maine Community College System, the Rioux Institute (Northeastern University), and the Maine Department of Education to coordinate responses to grant opportunities. Developed in response to a COVID-19 impact grant, the team has been meeting regularly to review and apply for grants to provide business support in entrepreneurship, use of data analytics, development of career pathways in the aquaculture industry and enhancement of educational opportunities to prepare students for occupations in the aquaculture industry.

The SWB continues its work with the University of Maine System, Maine Community College System, Maine Department of Corrections and Maine Department of Education in the implementation of industry recognized micro-credentials and digital badges that also earn college credits. These badges will help bring Maine closer to the goal of 60 percent of Mainers holding a credential of value by 2025. Maine has been making steady progress toward this goal and currently stands at 50.5 percent, up from just 43 percent in 2017.

The "All Learning Counts" initiative has implemented multiple pilot projects across the state. The projects target low income Mainers, people of color, New Mainers, incarcerated individuals, ex-offenders and tribal populations. One project in Lewiston is providing integrated contextualized English language instruction coupled with technical training and computer literacy.

The SWB recently participated in a call with University of Maine system partners, Maine Department of Corrections, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) about providing no-cost classes remotely to inmates at some of Maine's correctional facilities. Twelve inmates are currently taking one class from MIT. MIT is planning to offer additional classes in spring of 2021. The University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) already provides classes to inmates that lead to baccalaureate and master's degrees. The SWB is working to assist UMA in finding a way to provide credit for the MIT classes through prior learning assessment or pre-approval of courses. Working with MIT would provide a no-cost option for some inmates to begin their college journey.

Maine was one of six states selected to participate in the Disability and Employment Boot Camp, a technical assistance opportunity offered by the Employment and Training Administration. Led by the State Workforce Board, a team of partners with strong employer connections was established to participate; members include the Department of Economic and Community Development, the Maine Community College System, Vocational Rehabilitation, Registered Apprenticeship, and a Title IB service provider. The team will work to promote employment of people with disabilities and improve system services and supports to employers through integration and coordination of services and by identifying and addressing service gaps.

At the SWB October 2020 meeting, the Board unanimously approved establishing an Immigrant Workforce subcommittee of the SWB. The subcommittee will focus on developing strategies to begin to break down the barriers to employment the immigrant community is facing.

Local Level:

Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between required partners have been reviewed and refreshed with greater emphasis on integration of services. Co-enrollment, collaboration, and resource sharing between programs continues to expand. One-stop operators are in place in each local area and focused on implementation of the MOUs. The COVID pandemic has triggered increased collaboration and coordination between partners. Core partners have been meeting twice monthly on a statewide basis to discuss virtual responses to customer service needs and coordination between programs. Employment services staff and Title IB staff have united to identify and provide critical virtual informational sessions and workshops, with each agency taking on specific topics and offering them to a statewide audience.

Partners are well versed in the plethora of services provided by each and able to promote them to the job seekers and employers they respectively serve. Workforce stakeholders from employment services, Title IB, adult education, economic and community development, and the Maine Community College System meet regularly and work collaboratively to identify and address the workforce needs of Maine employers.

The necessary response required to address needs directly associated with two major emergencies, the opioid and COVID-19 crises, has led to deepened collaboration between local areas and various service providers. All three local boards and respective partners meet regularly to discuss approaches and initiatives they have launched to address these disasters.

Promising Practices for Achieving State Vision and Goals

The beginning of Program Year 2019 had Maine's Workforce system looking forward to fulfilling our shared mission: assisting job seekers, communities, and employers with achieving economic health through meaningful training and employment services. Projects relating to the emergence of digital learning, new forms of credentialing (i.e. badges), and the challenges of opioid use/addiction were underway. When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived and system partners shifted to other methods of service delivery and assisting unemployment claimants, each "lesson learned" revealed a promising practice.

COVID necessitated new ways of providing services to customers. Employment services expanded their live chat option and initiated use of a customer message portal to gather and respond to customer issues. Workshops and individual services are now able to be delivered remotely through virtual platforms that keep jobseekers and participants engaged. Service providers adjusted to changes as well, both in terms of their physical space, providing guidance to employers and jobseekers via phone and computer, and monitoring performed by remote technologies. Use of Microsoft Teams Chat demonstrated how staff across the state could easily and quickly confer with one another to find and share information in order to solve problems for customers.

Early Deployment of Technology

Like the rest of the country, Maine's system was overwhelmed by the deluge of unemployment inquiries, ranging from password resets to fixing errors and walking claimants and employers through the system. The Maine Department of Labor, in concert with state government, accelerated its deployment of communications technology to allow remote work and delivery of services, internal chat features, and online meetings with jobseekers, employers, and internal staff. These new tools allowed Maine to quickly train staff on new/emergency work, particularly for unemployment insurance claimants and employers requiring assistance with Unemployment assistance.

WIOA Title III staff were quickly trained on ReEmployME Maine's unemployment compensation claims system. With increased knowledge and skills, employment services staff were able to provide competent assistance to claimants regarding applying, submitting weekly certifications, unlocking accounts, and information on COVID-related relief programs.

Virtual Work Readiness Youth

In light of COVID-19 and as a response to the corresponding limits on summer employment, work experience opportunities and recruitment challenges in the youth program, Coastal Counties local area WIOA service provider, Workforce Solutions (operated by Goodwill of Northern New England), developed a virtual cohort-style work experience for youth program participants. The virtual program combined work readiness training with hands on project work, all developed in line with best practices in youth development. The cohort provided an opportunity for Workforce Solutions to engage youth in an interactive, structured way; offer work experience programming; and utilize the cohort as an event of interest and a recruitment strategy.

While outreach to community partners during COVID was challenging, the enrollment deadline around a cohort, the targeted marketing materials, and the opportunity for young people to earn a wage while engaged in remote work led to an increase in program interest. Workforce Solutions developed the curriculum to include interactive workshops that prepare young people for job acquisition and career exploration, including mock interviews with business community members and a career panel made up of professionals representing the careers of interest of the youth participants. Three cohorts were completed during PY19, with a total of 29 participants. Eight youth participants received support from Title IB funds to continue participation in the Bridge to Healthcare Careers program.

Addressing a “Silver Tsunami” in Rural Maine

With the oldest population in the nation, Maine faces many economic and demographic challenges that do not lend themselves to easy answers. Of concern is the looming retirement of thousands of small business owners putting jobs, economic activity, and community stability in jeopardy if those businesses are not sustained. According to a recent national survey by the Business Enterprise Institute, 79 percent of business owners want to retire within ten years, 57 percent in less than five years, and 33 percent in less than three years. Yet fewer than 1 in 5 of those owners has a plan to successfully make that happen.

Many owners hope their children will take over, but only 15 percent of businesses successfully pass on to the next generation. When owners do try to sell, only 20 percent of commercial listings lead to a successful sale. As a result, the default option is liquidation and closure, and the smaller and more rural the business, the greater the likelihood of that outcome. The largest single cause of avoidable job loss in the U.S. is from business closure due to owner retirement.

During PY19, the Northeaster Workforce Development Board partnered with the Cooperative Development Institute (CDI) to provide outreach and education to small businesses throughout the workforce board’s network of one-stop partners. CDI is developing a series of videos that will be posted online for small business owners to access during time away from the business. Retiring business owners are informed about employee buyout options that will keep business doors open and existing jobs in place.

Bridge to Healthcare Careers

The Bridge to Healthcare Careers program, overseen by the Greater Portland Workforce Initiative, and with Portland Adult Education as the training provider, ran three cohorts and successfully prepared 28 individuals to pursue credential bearing training to become Certified Nursing Assistants. The service provider for Coastal Counties Workforce Board, Workforce Solutions, collaborated on the project supported eligible participants with WIOA funding and connection to a career advisor with expertise in developing individualized training pathways and effectively addressing and ameliorating barriers to success.

One key element to the success of the Bridge model is the involvement of employer advisors. Employers recommend, edit, and provide advice on the Bridge curriculum; interact with students by offering information sessions, facility tours, mock interviews, and resume reviews; and create an on-ramp to Certified Nursing Assistant training by strategically scheduling course start dates in line with Bridge graduation.

Lewiston CareerCenter Community Partnership

In Lewiston/Auburn a collaboration between community partners including the CareerCenter, Community Concepts, the Lewiston-Auburn Metro Chamber of Commerce, Goodwill Northern New England, the City of Lewiston, the John T. Gorman Foundation, FedCap (Maine's TANF provider) and Adult Education was launched. The group have been meeting weekly since the spring identifying and uniting urgent needs and connecting job seekers with barriers to employment but with matching skills and assisting with the application process, assessing appropriateness for the positions and generating a warm handoff to the employer. The process resulted in hire of participants that otherwise would not have been interviewed and/or hired in another situation. One partner employer, Schooner Estates in Auburn, hired several candidates in positions as nursing assistants, dietary technicians and in housekeeping and maintenance.

Whole Family Approach to Service Delivery

Aroostook County Action Program, the WIOA Title IB provider in Aroostook County in the Northeastern local area, continues to develop its whole family approach. Through a comprehensive service delivery system, participants with children are receiving wrap-around services that help them find and retain employment. An internal referral system enables participants to take advantage of a menu of benefits that provide resources, including case management, housing, recovery coaching, energy assistance and more; resources that help them succeed in their plan toward self-sustaining employment. Similar programs, such as the 2-Gen Family Futures Downeast and the Greater Portland Workforce Initiative, have been implemented in other areas of the state through which WIOA Title IB and Title III services are integrated with education, housing, social services, and other community programs to ensure long term family stability, career development, and economic well-being.

Saddleback Virtual and Drive-Through Job Fair

Saddleback Ski resort in Rangeley, Maine is opening after five years of being closed. The local CareerCenter met with the owners early on, to ascertain service needs. In preparation for the ski season, the CareerCenter assisted with a two-day hiring event. Day one consisted of a virtual job fair and day two a drive-up job fair at Saddleback Mountain. In addition to staffing the event, the CareerCenter promoted the job fair and led Saddleback in the process of how to manage the events. The event was considered a success and resulted in 30 new hires.

Construction Sector Partnership

The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Area continued offering a construction training cohort a collaboration between the local adult education provider, Eastern Maine

Development Corporation, employment services, Community Concepts, the City of Lewiston, FedCap, and others. Two cohorts resulted in twenty candidates successfully completing the training and getting hired by local area employers. Planning is underway for a fifth cohort for which participant will be recruited from target populations. Local businesses partner testimonials have encouraged other employers to request similar recruitment and training strategies.

Braiding Services to Assist Transitioning Veteran and Spouse

In May, a transitioning service member (TSM) planning to move home to Maine started to receive daily job listings from the Disabled Veteran's Outreach Provider (DVOP) in the Brunswick CareerCenter. When the pandemic hit, the TSM worried that his efforts to move home would be stifled. The DVOP connected him with the local Boots2Roots organization that assisted him with housing and some job search. He was interested in entering the criminal justice system as a police officer, the DVOP forwarded numerous security and local police jobs to the TSM, who was hired by the Brunswick Police Department. The DVOP also forwarded job listings to the TSM's spouse who found employment at a hospital in Portland enabling the transitioning service member and family to return home to Maine.

Weekly Jobseeker Newsletter

Employers continued hiring and people continued seeking employment even in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because the CareerCenters had to suspend in-person services, the Bureau of Employment Services began sending a weekly email to jobseekers. Its initial focus was broadcasting critical COVID-19 related job opportunities such as jobs with the Maine Center for Disease Control and manufacturers of COVID related medical response products and other listings but has now expanded to include relevant, employment-related news and information. It highlights short- and long-term opportunities for jobseekers on training, employment-related workshops, virtual and drive-in job fairs, how to access services through partner systems and special projects such as the opioid and COVID dislocated worker emergency grants. Recipients of the newsletter include job seekers registered with the Maine JobLink and workforce staff of partner agencies.

Workforce and Recovery

The Northeastern Workforce Development Board continued its effort to reduce barriers to employment for people in recovery or an arrest history. A critical part of that mission is to demonstrate the value of recovery and ways to better support people in recovery. To that end, the board partnered with Healthy Acadia to provide the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery's (CCAR) Recovery Coach Basics Training to workforce development partners. Two trainings have been offered so far to 27 workforce professionals with additional training sessions scheduled for PY20.

Additionally, the workforce board has partnered with the Bangor Area Recovery Network (BARN) to design a new workshop called "Recovery Works for ME". This workshop is designed with employers in mind, highlighting the cost of substance use disorder and how the solution of

recovery is beneficial to our region and the workplace. A pilot session was conducted with 19 participants. The feedback was very positive and fine tuning for future iterations is in process.

Connecting New Mainers to the Financial Services Sector

The New Mainer Teller Training program, launched by Portland Adult Education in January is a unique collaboration between several area banks, credit unions, and financial institutions to develop a curriculum to prepare the foreign-trained participants to enter the financial services sector as bank tellers.

Coastal Counties' service provider, Workforce Solutions, supported seven individuals through the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs to help with their training goals. These individuals, each with their own individual, diverse backgrounds, entered a 12-week, 165-hour program consisting of six courses that led to the Today's Teller Certification. Even with the course moving entirely online due to COVID-19, all of Workforce Solutions' participants successfully completed the training and earned their credentials in April. After an assessment with Portland Adult Education and the connected employers, five of Workforce Solutions' participants completed further training and credential attainment through a 2nd class in Banking Today.

One participant entered an On-the-Job-Training (OJT) with Infinity Federal Credit Union, has since successfully completed the OJT, and is currently expanding his role at Infinity. Two other participants have been offered employment at other local banks, one has started employment and the other has an anticipated start date. The additional participants are working with both their Career Advisors and their employer mentors on their job search and are hopeful that they will secure employment.

Life Navigator Role in Serving Individuals with Barriers to Employment

With historically low unemployment rates, an ongoing opioid crisis, housing shortages, and myriad other issues facing the region. Workforce Solutions observed a significant increase of high-need, high-barrier individuals seeking services and recognized that they required a level of service beyond the traditional career services and introduced a new specialist to their team known as a Life Navigator.

The Life Navigator role is an innovative approach to addressing needs of the most difficult to serve populations. Utilizing best practices developed in projects such as CCWI's Pre-Release Employment Project (PREP), the Career Advisor and Life Navigator model represents the best methods of workforce development paired with social services. The life navigator support is like a general case manager and may provide practical counseling and resources to a participant throughout program enrollment or provides a one-time intervention to address a specific barrier, such as housing after which the participant continues to work with their Career Advisor.

Employer-Driven Approach for Youth

In the fall of 2019, Eastern Maine Development Corp. began discussions with municipalities throughout the Northeastern region to address their pressing workforce needs that are being precipitated by an aging workforce and potential for retirements. Across the board it was clear

that employers were open to working with our programs proactively reach out to young workers to promote consideration of careers in the public sector. EMDC approached adult education providers and community colleges to develop a curriculum that would combine work-ready, work-based training and occupational skill development to be delivered in a cohort format. Positions in Public Works, wastewater, and other city departments were identified as target occupations and as a result the Young Mainer's Workforce Academy was developed and set to kick off in March 2020; however, due to COVID it was put on hold until June when a "virtual" version of the program was launched with fourteen young workers participating. Staff from the municipalities and other community employers played a hands-on role in the in the pilot Academy, during which participants attended a virtual class two days a week, followed with hands on experience in the workplace. All fourteen participants completed this first cohort. The program has subsequently graduated its second cohort of youth and a third is in the planning stages.

PY19 Challenges

At the start of PY19, the unemployment rate was the lowest it has ever been, and employers were struggling to fill available positions. Customers served through the CareerCenter network were those with the most significant barriers to employment and required more intensive services. The system focused on recruiting people to Maine, facilitating employment for underutilized populations such as formerly incarcerated, people with disabilities, new Mainers, and youth to meet employer needs. Part of the challenge in finding employees is driven by Maine's demographic imbalance where there are more people retiring annually than who are entering the workforce.

With the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020, unemployment ballooned to 10.4 percent, having a significant impact on Maine's workers and businesses. While Maine has fared better than much of the country in terms of COVID-19 infections, deaths and unemployment, it is still having a vast effect on its citizens. Maine's leisure and hospitality industry were hampered by travel restrictions and COVID-19 safety protocols. Nearly 40,000 jobs were lost between February and April with an additional loss of more than 15,000 jobs since then. Sectors such as healthcare and social assistance and manufacturing have also seen significant losses. Women make up a larger portion of the workforce in these sectors, which is reflected in unemployment claims showing that women making up about 55 percent of continued claims since April. There is additional concern, not reflected in that number, regarding women who have left the workforce due to COVID-19 and the increased need to look after children as schools move to remote learning for K-12 students and daycares close or reduce numbers served.

Maine's initial unemployment claims surged from 634 during week ending 3/14/20 to 21,459 the following week, rising to a high of 30,889 claimants two weeks after that. In response, Maine Department of Labor staff from all bureaus were rapidly trained to assist claimants, triage claims, answer claimant questions, clear blocked claims, and confirm claimant wages. This allowed UI staff to focus on more complex claims while the department recruited, interviewed and hired additional staff to help process claims and hired a contractor to handle the overload portion of

phone traffic. The experience has resulted in a better understanding of Maine's unemployment system from both the State's and claimant perspective, information that will result in staff ability to streamline the process.

Providing remote services to the public during COVID is a key challenge. Maine's CareerCenters were closed to walk-in services and most staff shifted quickly to remote work and use of virtual technologies such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Staff quickly adapted to meeting with each other and clients to one-on-one and group services. Individual lack of access to technology or reliable internet have been issues for both staff and clients. CareerCenters and public libraries are two common locations where the public could utilize computers and the internet to access unemployment and apply for work, but with both types of facilities closed, many Mainers were without access. Public schools, libraries, and municipalities responded by providing open WIFI as much as possible during this time, but access remains an issue for many.

Education throughout the State has been impacted by COVID-19 as well. Public schools and higher education moved to full remote learning in March, requiring those systems to rapidly shift to new formats and adjust teaching methods and how to evaluate students. This additionally highlighted gaps in access to technology and reliable internet service. Public schools have responded by providing students with technology as well as "hot spots" for internet access. Internet companies have also stepped up to provide free short-term internet service to some.

Maine's higher education providers at the University of Maine and Community College systems have taken steps to evaluate course work and programs and identify how content can be delivered remotely and which are critical to in-person course work. Lessons learned could help fuel future advancements opening coursework to more rural and remote communities which will inevitably address transportation barriers as students would not be required to be on site five days a week.

The pandemic continues to challenge the system, an anticipated 35,000 unemployment claimants are on the verge of exhausting benefits and employers continue to struggle to fill vacancies. Lessons learned and partnerships formed will be critical elements in rebuilding our economy.

National Dislocated Worker Grants

Opioid Disaster DWG

In February of 2020, the U.S. Department of Labor approved the Maine Department of Labor's application for a Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker grant to address the opioid crisis with funding up to \$6,281,891; \$2,093,964 released initially. This \$6.2m grant, entitled Connecting to Opportunities, serves eligible individuals either directly impacted by the crisis or otherwise qualified and interested in substance use disorder/recovery occupations and related fields. Service delivery is embedded through collaboration and core partnership between the Maine Department of Labor, the State Workforce Development Board, local Workforce Boards and WIOA Title 1b dislocated worker service providers. Each local area, working closely with community partners, provides their full spectrum of employment, training and support services in each region of the State.

Coordination with Rapid Response Activities: The National Health Emergency Dislocated Worker Grant is a core resource, among others, shared with impacted workers by the Rapid Response team. This team includes WIOA Title 1b dislocated worker program service provider representatives (SPR) who are the delivery agent of DWG services at the local level. Rapid response representatives contact impacted workers and help make direct staff to staff referrals to service providers to ensure all workers are afforded the opportunity to access essential services.

Co-enrollment and Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) Co-enrollment and Integrated Service Delivery are natural opportunities to ensure program or funding source service gaps are coordinated and filled with other WIOA program resources such as the dislocated worker program. Maine's DWG and WIOA service providers are one in the same entity and, as members of the Rapid Response team, work hand in hand to ensure that the dislocated worker/customer accesses and benefits from as well as maximizes resources available.

Disaster Emergency Management Activities: The National Health Emergency DWG includes disaster relief employment to support the delivery of services. Relief workers, called **Peer Connectors** for this grant, work in each of the three workforce development areas. These jobs are designed to bridge the workforce and recovery systems to assist all participants in accessing and navigating services. Individuals in these positions work directly with key community partners to coordinate and conduct outreach, expand awareness of the project, and facilitate referral and joint service delivery. They also play a vital role in providing on-going support to enrolled participants as they work toward their employment and training goals. Lastly, they also receive services through the grant.

COVID Disaster DWG

Grant Background: MDOL received the million-dollar grant for the hiring of disaster relief workers to aid their peers in accessing a vast menu of humanitarian services and resources related to the crisis. The grant will connect over 300 affected workers to programs, resources and reemployment opportunities in highly affected areas (Cumberland County, Lewiston/Auburn). In addition, disaster relief workers will provide basic career services and promote co-enrollment in programs that provide more intensive services such as education and training; ensuring those requiring additional assistance are connected to the correct resources.

Disaster Relief Workers: Workforce Solutions hired 10 Disaster Relief Workers from among those who have lost employment as a result of the COVID pandemic. Relief Worker's background's include New Mainers, individuals with disabilities, individuals experiencing homelessness, younger workers, single parents and justice involved individuals as well as workers dislocated from two industry sectors most hard hit by the pandemic - hospitality and retail. 7 languages are spoken among the team. Onboarding incorporated two weeks of comprehensive training provided by Maine Equal Justice, DHHS, 2-1-1 and others to prepare them to assist affected workers to access resources such as childcare assistance, food stamps, general assistance, Maine Care/ Health Care, Immigrant access, reemployment, training and education, temporary assistance for needy families, unemployment compensation and more.

The grant has recently expanded to the Lewiston/Auburn area and recruitment for 5 disaster relief workers is now underway.

Participant Outreach and Recruitment: Community Partners are actively assisting with outreach efforts, including the City of Portland, Gateway Community Services, Greater Portland Workforce Initiative, Maine 211, Maine Access Immigrant Network, Maine AFL-CIO, DHHS, MDOL, Maine Equal Justice, Maine Immigrant Rights Center, Presente Maine, Cumberland County Regional Food Banks and others. Workers mail and post flyers in supermarkets and key community gathering places, inform communities by word-of-mouth, and issue mass emails and social media blasts to ensure affected workers are made aware of the one-on-one assistance available to them.

In-School and Out-of-School Youth

Local area service providers continue to serve both in-and out-of-school youth, with the emphasis on out-of-school as required under WIOA. During PY19, 400 youth received youth service elements of which 19.5% represented in-school youth at either the secondary or post-secondary level. There was some variance in the number of in-school youth served between the local areas, with the Coastal Counties area serving the greatest number of in-school youth.

Local Area	Out-of-School	In-School
Northeastern	147	28
Central Western	51	2
Coastal Counties	123	48

Maine will be requesting a waiver of the 75 percent spending requirement in order to better align with the goals of the Governor's Children's Cabinet, which has identified work experience during high school as a key factor in future educational and employment success. The waiver will permit Maine Title IB programs to support this worthy goal and reinforce newly developed collaborations between the Maine Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, and Corrections to address critical issues facing Maine's youth.

Performance and Accountability

Program year 2019 (PY19) refers to the time period between July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. The report includes data on active participants and those who exited during this timeframe as well as those who participated and exited during previous program periods, because exit-based outcome data is never readily available due to a 90-day retroactive exit date. The participant exit date is based on the last day a participant received a service but received no additional services for a period of 90 days. After 90 days without a service the date of their last service becomes the exit date. Data for exit-based performance measures take between three and five quarters after exit to become available; for example, the participant may attain a credential during participation or within four quarters after they exit the program to be included in the measure.

PY19 Negotiated and Actual Outcomes

Maine has not initiated any state-specific measures at this time. Negotiated and actual performance results for program year 2019 will not be fully known until adjustments are made using the federal statistical adjustment model; however, based on negotiated and actual performance numbers attained Maine met or exceeded the 90% threshold for WIOA negotiated performance measures as follows:

MEASURE	Adult Neg.	Adult Actual	DW Neg.	DW Actual	Youth Neg.	Youth Actual	WP Neg.	WP Actual
Employed 2 nd Qtr. after Exit*	73.0%	71.29%	79.0%	85.28%	70.0%	72.43%	65.0%	69.84%
Employed 4 th Qtr. after Exit*	71.0%	70.26%	76.0%	82.58%	70.0%	72.95%	64.0%	65.68%
Median \$\$ 2 nd Qtr. after Exit	\$5,000	\$5,116.23	\$6,600	\$6,759	N/A	\$3,928	\$5,100	\$5,960
Credential Attainment	61.0%	66.29%	56.0%	75.0%	51.0%	56.48%	N/A	N/A

Key: DW= Dislocated Worker, WP= Wagner-Peyser, Neg.= Negotiated, * includes Youth placement in postsecondary education.

Reportable Individuals

Customers who access services independently or only access informational services from staff are referred to as “reportable individuals” and are not included in performance outcomes. However, the numbers of reportable individuals accessing this level of services during PY19 hit an all-time high numbering 181,336, a significant increase of the 42,000 reported for PY18, an expansion reflecting the employment upheaval caused by the COVID pandemic and reflective of the number of workers required to register with Maine JobLink after initiating a claim for unemployment compensation.

Calculating Performance

Understanding how to calculate and negotiate performance measures is complex but important for local board and service provider staff to plan actions and negotiate outcomes. To promote better understanding, several technical assistance sessions were provided to lead staff from service provider agencies and local boards on how performance is adjusted and scored and how, why and when the statistical adjustment model is applied. In addition, the Maine Department of Labor instituted a new quarterly reporting tool that captures State and Local performance calculations and a comparison between planned and actual enrollment numbers by program. This tool was necessary to ensure that service providers from each local area are reviewing progress toward implementation plans and negotiated measures in a standardized way.

The COVID pandemic complicated local area performance negotiations this year, necessitating additional technical assistance. The assistance and resulting process helped local board members and chief elected officials better understand how performance is adjusted based on economic factors, participant characteristics and other phenomena beyond anyone’s control at time of negotiations, such as a pandemic.

It is also important to understand how enrollment into multiple programs with a common exit may affect performance timelines. Participants in a common exit program remain enrolled in each program until 90 days have passed in which the participant went without a service from any other common exit program. Common programs include:

- Employment Services (Wagner-Peyser)
- Jobs for Veterans State Grant
- Title IB Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs
- Trade Adjustment Act

Unadjusted Negotiated Performance Levels for PY2018 and PY2019 by Local Area

Northeastern WDB	PY 2018 Negotiated	PY18 Actual	PY 2019 Negotiated	PY19 Actual
Adult Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	72.6%	73.33%	73.0%	65.45%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	68.0%	81.01%	72.0%	66.42%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$4,655	\$4,851	\$4,950	\$4,454
Credential Attainment Rate	59.0%	76.15%	58.0%	64.86%
Dislocated Worker Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	78.0%	85.29%	79.75%	85.53%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	74.5%	81.13%	77.0%	85.48%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$6,300	\$6,715	\$6,400	\$6,636
Credential Attainment Rate	52.5%	75.68%	53.5%	90.63%
Youth Program				
Employment or Education 2 nd Qtr. after exit	69.0%	64.29%	70.0%	71.64%
Employment or Education 4 th Qtr. after exit	68.0%	73.47%	69.5%	66.67%
Credential Attainment Rate	50.0%	64.29%	58.5%	52.08%

Central Western Maine WDB	PY 2018 Negotiated	PY18 Actual	PY 2019 Negotiated	PY19 Actual
Adult Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	75.0%	76.19%	76.0%	80.90%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	72.0%	76.62%	72.0%	79.07%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$4,950	\$4,881	\$4,950	\$5,767
Credential Attainment Rate	61.0%	66.18%	61.0%	70.42%
Dislocated Worker Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	77.0%	83.87%	78.75%	100.0%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	74.0%	78.82%	75.0%	72.41%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$6,600	\$6,575	\$6,800	\$6,526
Credential Attainment Rate	59.0%	79.55%	60.0%	60.00%
Youth Program				
Employment or Education 2 nd Qtr. after exit	70.0%	67.96%	71.0%	71.11%
Employment or Education 4 th Qtr. after exit	70.0%	82.86%	71.0%	84.21%
Credential Attainment Rate	50.0%	46.15%	49.0%	50.00%

Coastal Counties WDB	PY 2018 Negotiated	PY18 Actual	PY 2019 Negotiated	PY19 Actual
Adult Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	70.2%	66.19%	70.0%	73.02%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	70.0%	66.87%	69.0%	65.31%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$5,095	\$5,294	\$5,100	\$5,708

Credential Attainment Rate	60.0%	55.86%	60.0%	60.00%
Dislocated Worker Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	79.0%	76.38%	78.5%	80.00%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	76.8%	75.95%	76.0%	83.91%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$6,600	\$6,645	\$6,600	\$7,380
Credential Attainment Rate	55.0%	56.79%	55.0%	64.00%
Youth Program				
Employment or Education 2 nd Qtr. after exit	69.0%	67.00%	69.0%	73.97%
Employment or Education 4 th Qtr. after exit	69.0%	63.70%	69.5%	71.01%
Credential Attainment Rate	50.0%	57.14%	45.5%	67.65%

Effectiveness Serving Employers (ESE)

Partners continue to track services to employers in the Maine JobLink system which generates the annual ESE report. Maine reports on two measures, “Employer Penetration” and “Repeat Business.” Adult education partners will receive training on employer services tracking in December 2020 as they have made little to no entries to date.

PY2019 EFFECTIVENESS SERVING EMPLOYERS	
EMPLOYER SERVICE CATEGORY	ESTABLISHMENT COUNT
Employer Information and Support Services	1971
Workforce Recruitment Assistance	1805
Engaged in Strategic Planning or Economic Development	7
Accessing Untapped Labor Pools	40
Training Services	40
Incumbent Worker Training Services	0
Rapid Response/Business Downsizing Assistance	327
Planning Layoff Response	59
Employer Penetration	5%
Repeat Business	31.9%

Data Validation

The Maine Department of Labor has implemented a new process for validating data integrity, which has been clarified in the new Data Element Validation (DEV) Manual implemented during the first quarter of the program year. The new process requires service providers to validate documentation of eligibility before approving enrollments, and to conduct data validation on a small sample of files every quarter and submit a report identifying any validation failures and explaining how they will be addressed going forward. The new process is a work in progress and the resulting manual will be adjusted as guidance is issued by the U. S. Department of Labor. Maine is in the process of incorporating additional data elements identified in TEGL 23-19 into the manual.

Due to COVID-19, Maine has shifted to working remotely. This has affected ability to collect and upload documents, leading to implementation of a temporary COVID policy that allows staff to view and attest to the validity of documents during virtual meetings with participants, with the goal of collecting documentation at a future date. The new TEGl also permits self-attestation as a valid documentation method.

Customer Satisfaction

Due to the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 on the CareerCenters and related services in March, MDOL was unable to administer the traditional customer satisfaction survey in PY19. The practice will be re-established for PY20.

However; in September 2020, consultants from the McKinsey Team designed and conducted a survey to solicit customer feedback related to their CareerCenter services experience including types of services known (i.e. aware of), frequency of service usage, helpfulness of used services, and additional resources desired in job search.

The survey was sent out to a randomly selected list of 18,000 customers, including 3,000 Maine JobLink users who have been active in the last 12 months and were not likely to have had their employment impacted by COVID-19. 800+ responses were received. The sample was weighed to match actual constituent demographics in terms of age, gender, and education levels, after which a total of 572 responses were analyzed. Responses represented those who received MDOL services pre (7%) and post pandemic (93%); were self-employed (15%), reported one employer (58%), had 2+ employers (25%) or did not work (2%); reported having been unemployed once (59%), 2 times (25%), or 3+ times (15%). Overall, 62% of the respondents indicated they used CareerCenter related services in the past 12 months.

While customers identified areas of improvement regarding re-employment in these unprecedented times, overall Maine's CareerCenters and related services received high marks and the resources and services as somewhat or very helpful in 8 of the 9 categories measured. Two "pain points" for customers were identified:

- **Remote setting introduces new job search challenges for customers:** Customers conducting job-search during the pandemic face new requirements on their skillset and job search norms. Virtual interviewing skills, Virtual networking skills, and digital job application skills typically have not been taught in traditional job search settings. Even experienced professionals are finding themselves in novel waters given the advent of Zoom culture. ***New ways of searching, interviewing, and working lead to uncomfortable feelings of uncertainty.***
 - 25% of customers surveyed say they're likely to use CareerCenter services in the next 12 months to get support on job search skills
 - 17% of customers say they're likely to use CareerCenter services in the next 12 months to get one on one career coaching to help them with their job search

- **Higher skilled individuals experiencing a layoff for the first time are facing unexpected career challenges:** As a result of the pandemic, the system is seeing an influx of claimants, who have never experienced or expected to be unemployed. These tenured professionals can find the more traditional offerings from CareerCenters too generic for their needs and are desperately seeking help to change industries, develop new skills, or even learn a completely new career (i.e. remote jobs). Individuals report feeling “stuck” both geographically and professionally and are seeking resources to change careers or learn new skills.
 - 16% of customers whose job search was affected by COVID cite needing updated skills or training to be competitive in their field of employment
 - 33% of customers whose job search was affected by COVID state they are in a vulnerable population and cannot find work in their field that accommodate for their safety
 - 30% of customers who are likely to use CareerCenter services in the next 12 months would like help finding training or skill building opportunities

Insights and Opportunities:

- Customers impacted by the pandemic may not have as much awareness into CareerCenter offerings, particularly given CareerCenter’s rapid transition to provision of virtual services.
 - Opportunities for additional communication of virtual CareerCenter resources may help promote awareness and use of resources
- Almost half of customers who are aware of resources offered by CareerCenters learn of resources from the website; therefore, providing clear and updated information on in person and virtual offerings would help those who use the website to find resources they need
- Those with more formal education find Maine JobLink to have fewer job listings and training opportunities that suit their needs
- 1/3 of customers learn of resources via the MDOL emails; therefore, MDOL should consider further using this channel to disseminate the latest news and updates on resources offered at CareerCenters
- Despite being rated as a helpful resource, 1:1 career coaching is not identified by customers as a resource they’d like to use in the near future.
 - Additionally, the fewest number of customers were aware of 1:1 coaching at CareerCenters, possibly attributable to the suspension of in-person services at the CareerCenters

Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19 this year; our customers have overwhelmingly indicated the level of service they’ve received via Live Chat and CareerCenter phones, workshops, and our CareerCenter Consultant team have been overwhelmingly helpful. Maine CareerCenters embrace the opportunity to use the information provided by the survey and the experience of the past year to further improve communication and services.

Sector and Business Engagement and Strategies

The Statewide Workforce Assistance Team (SWAT)

The SWAT continued to convene in PY2019 to share best practices, provide updates on special projects, learn about new initiatives and most importantly to collaborate with one another on how best to serve Maine businesses through the wide variety of workforce development programs available.

SWAT members include business service staff from a variety of partner agencies including Title IB service providers, Vocational Rehabilitation, CareerCenters, Rapid Response, Apprenticeship, Maine Community College System, Adult Education, Chambers of Commerce and other interested parties including non-profit organizations such as Coastal Enterprises Inc. and the Department of Corrections. During the meetings, partners discuss recent and/or upcoming business activities and explore possibilities for collaboration. WIOA Title IB partners take turns organizing the location, content and facilitation of the meetings which typically include upwards of 50 individuals.

In addition to partner updates, the most recent meeting included a discussion of the apprenticeship programs developed in Maine State Prisons to prepare inmates for successful re-entry into society. SWAT members were asked to keep incarcerated individuals in mind when assisting businesses with workforce needs. The group are also able to promote the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and the Federal Bonding programs that support employers willing to engage barriered populations. The Maine at Work Initiative (MAWI) developed during a Sector Partnership NEG grant resulted in a “no wrong door” method for businesses to connect with Maine’s workforce development system. Inquiries generated through the MAWI web portal are received by MDOL and assessed and directed to appropriate SWAT member agencies best suited to lead the response.

Workforce development programming for asylum seekers in the Portland and Lewiston areas in collaboration with local school districts was presented. Both programs work to train individuals interested in becoming teachers to start their career pathway as educational technicians; fulfilling a high-demand occupational need and putting asylum seekers on a pathway to family sustaining careers.

Maine Apprenticeship Program

State and federal apprenticeship resources have been directed to developing new apprenticeship opportunities across multiple industry sectors in Maine with a focus on the construction trades, healthcare, manufacturing, personal services as well as food service and accommodation occupations.

The Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP) has leveraged the resources, expertise and commitment of many workforce partners, including the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and the state-funded Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP) and MAP tuition reimbursement program. These partners provide support and referral services to participants. MAP staff engage business partners within the targeted sectors to provide technical assistance and facilitate the

development of schedules of work, curricula and standards of apprenticeship. This program year staff worked with vocational rehabilitation and WIOA service providers to expand their understanding of how apprenticeship can be an integral component of their programs. Agreements between the MAP and various partners are in the process of development that will facilitate co-enrollment of apprentices in WIOA programs that can provide resources to support apprentices and cover training costs.

The MAP developed a pilot project with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) to identify apprenticeship opportunities for their participants. This project has increased both client and counselor understanding and applicability of apprenticeship; increased collaboration between BRS and MAP; supported system alignment via identification of common goals, outcomes and success rates; increased the number of people with disabilities in registered apprenticeship and raised employer awareness of how people with disabilities contribute significantly to the workforce.

The Rehabilitation Services Apprenticeship Project has assisted MAP with marketing the benefits of apprenticeship and to improve understanding of the value added by apprenticeship. Such organic outreach increases MAP capacity; supports employer compliance with EEO; increases apprenticeship opportunities for clients and adds viable skills to the workforce. More importantly, BRS staff has embraced the apprenticeship training model and recommends new apprenticeship sponsors to the program.

Waivers & Program Evaluation

There were no active waivers in place in Maine during PY19; however, Maine is in the process of applying for four waivers, as follows:

- **Waiver of the requirement to expend 75% of WIOA Title IB Youth funds on out-of-school youth.**
Approval of this waiver will permit local areas to invest more WIOA funds in work experience activities for low-income high school youth with barriers and provide additional supports to low-income, first-time college students with barriers to successfully completing their program and attaining a degree/credential.
- **Waiver of the requirement to conduct a formal evaluation of Title IB programs and activities.**
Maine receives the minimum amount of WIOA funding a State can receive. The cost of conducting an evaluation at the level of rigor required under WIOA is not feasible at this time. Approval of this waiver will allow the State to focus resources on other WIOA administrative requirements, such as program and financial monitoring, performance reporting and workforce system planning and integration.

- **Waiver of the requirement to develop a Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) to be used to negotiate and adjust performance for each of Maine's three local areas.**
The cost to develop and program a statistical adjustment model for each local far exceeds available resources.
- **Waiver of the limitation on use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for in-school-youth attending college.**
Approval of this waiver will permit the use of WIOA Title IB Youth funds to cover educational costs for low-income youth with barriers who are under age 21 and enrolled in credit-bearing, post-secondary education programs that lead to a recognized credential, degree or diploma.

Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion

During PY19 the Rapid Response team served 114 employers and 4,338 permanently laid off workers. Identification of the need for these services come from public information, WARN notices, and captured in a list generated weekly by the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation of five or more unemployment initial claims from any single employer. In addition to events for permanently laid off workers, the rapid response team reached out to 1,590 employers and 19,131 job seekers who were in jeopardy of layoff or temporarily furloughed due to COVID-19.

Affected workers receive an informational handout for laid-off workers distributed through the employers. The handout includes information on filing for unemployment, accessing health insurance options, and how to access services through the CareerCenter network from basic and individualized career services to employment and training opportunities. The handout is available on the CareerCenter website, as are recorded sessions of rapid response services that feature information from a variety of related partner programs and services.

The COVID pandemic demanded that the team identify alternate ways to deliver rapid response services. Last April, the team immediately shifted to providing virtual on-demand rapid response. The primary focus was assisting workers to access unemployment compensation. Staff respond to questions on how to file a claim and how to access Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. During the initial stages of COVID-19, the unemployment claims system was inundated with over a hundred thousand individuals attempting to file. For many, it was the first they had ever had the need to file a claim. The experience provided much needed insight for the unemployment system in Maine and better understanding of the challenges for affected workers who were unfamiliar with accessing information or services through technology, lacked technology or lived in remote areas without broadband access. To bridge this issue, the rapid response team worked directly with the employer to provide services both virtually and by phone. At one such session, over 160 participants from a permanent layoff were served through phone-in sessions which worked well for those with no computer access. The team continues to offer both virtual and phone-in rapid response sessions for laid off workers.

The primary goal of rapid response is facilitation of immediate reemployment. Information is provided on Maine's labor exchange system known as Maine JobLink or MJL. MJL lists all jobs and

immediate need jobs are highlighted. Affected workers are immediately apprised of positions requiring similar skill sets to their former employment whenever possible. Local providers from WIOA partner services and partner agencies participate in the presentations of their programs, are available to answer questions and provide access to services.

The pandemic brought on a huge increase in the demand for WorkShare applications and benefits. To assist with the need, the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation trained two rapid response staff who in turn assisted employers with WorkShare questions and concerns. Assisting employers to access WorkShare will continue to be part of the arsenal of the rapid response team in the future, providing more staffing and WorkShare information as a layoff aversion strategy. Rapid response staff participate on business service teams at the state and local offices which provides the team with immediate information about employer needs and concerns.

Staff training and protocols for co-enrolling TAA participants in the Title IB dislocated worker program were provided in early summer, a formal policy was issued in October shortly after the Trade Act final rule was published. Maine continues to emphasize TAA co-enrollment performance goals.

Rapid Response Events		
COASTAL COUNTIES		
Counties	Events	Workers
Cumberland	485	5,822
Knox	64	924
Lincoln	53	493
Sagadahoc	41	711
Waldo	36	286
York	94	821
Totals	773	5,097
CENTRAL WESTERN MAINE		
Androscoggin	37	516
Franklin	13	1,003
Kennebec	132	1,611
Oxford	53	1,641
Somerset	21	235
Totals	256	5,006
NORTHEASTERN		
Aroostook	56	456
Hancock	54	376
Penobscot	203	1,917
Piscataquis	12	90
Washington	38	300
Totals	363	3,139
MULTI-AREA		
Statewide	37	516
STATE TOTAL	1,429	13,758

MOST SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED SECTORS

- A. Retail
- B. Accommodations & Food Service
- C. Health Care/Social Services/Education
- D. Manufacturing

Community teams made up of rapid response leads, employment and training providers, unemployment compensation, community action programs, adult education, rehabilitation services, town managers, and various public and private organizations come together immediately to coordinate informational sessions and resources on behalf of affected workers.

Close partnerships with business assistance and economic development partners also support rapid response. By keeping business service agencies apprised of the types of resources and services available from the workforce development system, they know who to contact and the type of help that can be provided if they are the first to hear of a company in difficulty.

The State and region benefit significantly when the affected company works in close partnership to promote immediate reemployment efforts. The local economy continues to hum and savings in unemployment compensation indicate a significant return on investment for this type of coordinated response.

Set-Aside Funds

Maine is considered a small-funded state; most of the State set-aside funds pay for required activities such as grant and financial administration, monitoring, reporting, State workforce board and performance team staff and maintenance of the WIOA management information system.

During PY19 a small portion of rapid response set-aside funds were encumbered to support layoff aversion through a study of the feasibility of an employee buyout of a statewide home care nursing agency that had already announced intention to go out of business affecting hundreds of employees and significantly more patients. Unfortunately, the agency was unable to withstand losses long enough to contribute necessary information and involvement in the study. As such, the project was cancelled. Remaining rapid response funds were fully utilized during PY19 due to increased dislocations resulting from the COVID pandemic.

Wagner-Peyser 7(b) Funds

These Wagner-Peyser funds are used to develop and implement professional staff training program for employment services staff. The training takes place over three consecutive days and prepares new hires to perform required staff functions and gain a broad grasp of all WIOA core and required partner programs, an understanding of WIOA governance levels, and covers other topics such as workplace culture, employer and business services, diversity, disability etiquette and more.

Additionally, the funds support the cost of interpretation services for individuals who require ASL translation and for participants for whom English is not their primary languages.